

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Doris Taketa Kimura

Doris Taketa Kimura, second of five daughters, was born in Waipahu, O‘ahu, Hawai‘i, in 1926.

Her parents, Torao and Misu Taketa, were immigrants from Kumamoto-*ken*, Japan. The couple served as principal and teacher at Wailea Japanese-language School on the Big Island of Hawai‘i and Makawao Japanese-language School on Maui.

On December 7, 1941, Torao Taketa was removed from his home and detained at a facility in Wailuku, Maui. Family members were allowed to visit him there before he was sent to the Sand Island Detention Center.

With Torao Taketa’s incarceration and the closing of Japanese-language schools, the family had no means of support.

By late December 1942, Misu Taketa informed her daughters that the government would be moving them to the U.S. Mainland.

The Taketas were transported to Jerome War Relocation Center in Arkansas while their father was held at various facilities, including ones in New Mexico and Louisiana. At Camp Livingston, Louisiana, he received a visit from family.

Separated from family for almost three years, Torao Taketa was eventually reunited with his family at Tule Lake Segregation Center in California.

At war’s end, the Taketas returned to the islands, settling on O‘ahu where Torao Taketa searched for employment. At one time, he worked at a brewery; another time, he washed dishes. Later, with very little or no knowledge of cooking, he opened a *saimin* stand.

Doris and her husband, Stanley, founded and operated the House of Photography, a business still continued by two of their six children on O‘ahu.

Tape No. 57-6-1-12

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Doris Taketa Kimura (DK)

Honolulu, O‘ahu

June 29, 2012

BY: Michi Kodama-Nishimoto (MK) and Warren Nishimoto (WN)

MK: This is an interview with Doris Taketa Kimura on June 29, 2012. It's being held in Honolulu, Hawai'i. This is session one. The interviewers are Michi Kodama-Nishimoto and Warren Nishimoto.

So, Mrs. Kimura, good morning.

DK: Good morning.

MK: Thank you for having us.

DK: Oh, no problem. Glad to see you folks again.

MK: I guess we'll start with, when were you born?

DK: Let's see, 1926.

MK: And where were you born?

DK: Waipahu, O‘ahu.

MK: Your mother Misu Taketa—what have you been told about her background in Japan?

DK: Well, not much really. All I know is her parents—her father was a physician. I don't know how many sisters or brothers she had. I can't recall. I really don't know if they got married in Japan or in Hawai'i you know, but she married my father [Torao Taketa] and all I know is we were born in Waipahu area or Kahalu'u or somewhere in there. I'm not too sure. I don't know what my birth certificate says but that's where they were together and they were both Japanese-language school teachers from that time on.

MK: What *ken* or prefecture did your parents come from?

DK: They both came from Kumamoto. My dad was in the country area but my mom was [from] more city area because as I said her father was a physician. What I was told if I'm not mistaken is my dad came to their hospital—he had some kind of ailment—and that's how he saw my mom. That's what I was told anyway. That's how they got together.

MK: Had you heard anything about your father's background? Anything about him in Japan?

DR: Well, he came from real countryside. I knew he had one sister. I met his family when I went to Japan to visit way later. But, he came from a country area and he was very young, of course, when they came to Hawai'i. I don't know too much about Japan but I went back later and I visited the relatives and whatnot and where actually he came from. As soon as they got to Hawai'i, I think he had to work in some kind of plantation. I don't

- know what he did but later I think he got into the Japanese-language school and he taught. Both my parents taught.
- MK: You know from your memory of your early time on O‘ahu, where were you folks on O‘ahu?
- DK: We were very young. [From O‘ahu] we went to the Big Island [Hawai‘i Island] because he [father] had a teaching position there. So we went to Hakalau or Wailea. They would call it Wailea but it’s Hakalau, next town. So, Hakalau School is where we went, but we lived in Wailea. My parents both taught at that school in Wailea. It was a very small place but you know.
- MK: When you think back to the days when your parents were teaching at Wailea, what do you remember about your house—your living situation back in Wailea?
- DK: We were so young that we---we had fun because we had good neighbors like a Hawaiian family and one Japanese family that was kind of close by but [had] like twelve children. And us, only we had two at that time—me and my sister. We used to go and play at their home and the kids were always busy because there’s so many chores, right? Us, we had nothing to do. The parents were so nice. They didn’t object to us coming over. But we had a lot of fun over there on Big Island.
- MK: What did you folks do for fun?
- DK: We didn’t have toys or anything like that. We used to just run around I guess. I can’t remember.
- MK: As a family what kinds of things did you folks do—your father, your mother, yourself, and your older sister?
- DK: I know we went to the playground because it wasn’t too far away. My sister and I always went there to play. My dad was always busy because he was *kendō* person too. He used to teach *kendō*. He had so many things that he liked. He was a go player—you know those go-*ishi*—and *kendō* man, and he loved his fishing and all that stuff. So he was always out when he’s free. Fishing and all that. My mom was always home tending to us. She liked gardening so she was always around the garden and taking care of us. I really enjoyed my childhood in Big Island because we had nice neighbors.
- MK: Did you go to school on the Big Island?
- DK: Yes, I was there till third grade.
- MK: What school did you go to?
- DK: We went to Hakalau Elementary. We lived in Wailea but Hakalau is right next—the school is close to Wailea. Hakalau American [public] school is where we went until third grade I think.
- MK: How did you go from Wailea to Hakalau School?
- DK: Oh just walk. It wasn’t too far. Hakalau was further away but the school was closer to us than the people coming from Hakalau.
- MK: What do you remember about your school days at Hakalau?
- DK: Not too much though. You know we were young so we had a lot of fun playing with the kids. I can’t remember too much. (Chuckles)
- MK: I was wondering, who were your classmates at Hakalau? What kinds of kids?

- DK: They were Japanese. A lot of Portuguese I think those days. We didn't have too many Chinese or Koreans. I can't recall. Portuguese was some of them. Hawaiians, very few. I didn't know too many.
- MK: And like in your class, how many kids do you think you had in your class?
- DK: Gee, I can't remember. (Laughs) You don't think too much about that and then we moved to Maui when I was nine. I mean going to fourth grade or something I went to [Maui]. We moved to Maui because they had a bigger school opening for my dad.
- WN: So you went to Hakalau School?
- DK: Yes.
- WN: Do you remember Mr. Capellas?
- DK: Yes! How come?
- WN: Was he your principal?
- DK: Yes. How do you know him?
- WN: Well, he's a long time principal at Hakalau School and I know his son Laurence Capellas who also became principal at that school. So they had like two or three generations of Capellases at that school.
- DK: Oh. No kidding. Of course I remember Capellas. Yes.
- WN: Was that Mr. Eugene Capellas?
- DK: I don't know their first names but yes. Yes, of course.
- WN: And how was he? Do you remember?
- DK: We were young so we can't say. I can't remember. (Laughs) I remember Capellas. My goodness. Small world yeah?
- MK: You know sometimes when we interview people about their elementary school days, maybe they talk about the flag-raising ceremony in the morning or singing or. . .
- DK: Yes, I remember that. Yes, I do remember those things. They used to sing---they used to have maybe "God Bless America." From young days somehow those songs got to me and I said, "Gee I wish I can sing that kind of song." I really enjoyed music from young days.
- MK: So in those days what kinds of songs did you folks learn in elementary school over there?
- DK: You know I can't remember. I can't remember.
- MK: You kind of remember Mr. Capellas, how about some other teachers there?
- DK: I remember Kuniyoshi. I remember her. That was in Big Island. I get mixed up with Maui and Big Island.
- WN: At Hakalau School do you remember mostly local-born teachers or Mainland teachers?
- DK: I think there were more local those days. I don't think people came from the Mainland at that time.
- MK: What do you remember about your dad's Japanese-language school in Wailea?

DK: Well, he was very strict is all I know. He was very strict. They had to behave and if they [didn't]---I remember they were—I don't know what the little kids did but he would let them go in the corner and this heavy dictionary, thick one, they had to hold like that for the longest time. That was their [punishment].

WN: Oh they held in their hands . . .

DK: Yes, they had to stay in the corner of the class. (Laughs)

WN: Oh my goodness.

DK: I know! I remember that part. He was very strict though.

MK: Very strict. And what grades did your father teach?

DK: Well, when we were in Big Island, those days were smaller schools, so just my mom and my dad [taught]. So, they taught from first grade—I don't know if they had kindergarten at that time—till like eighth grade.

MK: Since it's just your mom and your dad, how did they divide it up? The teaching duties.

DK: I wish I can remember. Maybe my dad had certain grades and my mom had certain grades.

MK: Did you go to the Japanese school too? Your parents' Japanese school?

DK: I'm sure I did. (DK and MK laugh.) Yes, because I was old enough to go to school.

MK: How was it for you being the daughter of the teachers?

DK: Not too good.

(Laughter)

Maui, no---Hawai'i [Big Island] wasn't so bad but Maui was kind of. . . and I was older too.

MK: I'd like to ask, how were you in your Japanese on the Big Island? Your learning Japanese.

DK: I want to say, "Good." (DK and MK laugh.) But we had to speak more Japanese right? Because my parents—they'd know broken English but we spoke more Japanese at that time.

MK: You were saying you were on Maui—on the Big Island—until about third grade?

DK: Yes. Fourth grade we were in Maui already. There was an opening in Makawao. Do you know where Makawao is? Near Kula.

MK: What was Makawao like when you first went there? What was the place like?

DK: It was a little bigger, I thought. I can't remember too much. I was there until eighth grade I think.

MK: And the home that you lived in? Because it was bigger, bigger school—Makawao—was your home bigger too?

DK: I think so. Yes. I have some—I don't know if I have pictures of the home but I have some photographs too you know, somewhere.

- MK: Try describe to us how that house looked like. What was that house like?
- DK: Very simple. Makawao is---we had three bedrooms and a living room and a kitchen. It was pretty good for those days I think. What else can I say? (Laughs)
- MK: Those days how big was your family by the time you were on Maui?
- DK: Let me see. I was the second one. My third, four—where did my youngest sister get born? She's still here, my youngest sister. I think she was born in Maui. Yes, she was born in Maui.
- MK: So your family had expanded yeah?
- DK: Five of us—girls.
- MK: All girls?
- DK: Yes. (Laughs)
- MK: What was your neighborhood like in Makawao? You told us about what it was like in Wailea. What was it like in Makawao?
- DK: Makawao. . . let's see. What did we do at Makawao? We lived in a cottage and then. . . You know, I can't remember too much at Makawao. I used to have a good friend. She's still around but she's in Pukalani, Maui.
- Then when I was eighth grade—was it eighth grade? Ninth. I went a little bit of ninth or tenth, I forgot. We went to the relocation camp. Not too good memories, I don't know.
- MK: You know in Makawao you were saying that the school was bigger yeah?
- DK: Yes.
- MK: So, what was the community like then? How would you describe the people in the Makawao community?
- DK: It was a bigger place. We had—how many more teachers besides my parents?—three more I think. So five of them.
- MK: So it is a bigger place.
- DK: Bigger place, yes.
- MK: More Japanese then, must be more teachers.
- DK: Portuguese was plentiful. A few Chinese I think.
- MK: At this place in Makawao, your father was teacher and principal?
- DK: Yes. They had to teach too—the principals, all of them I think at that time. But he was the principal.
- MK: And how about your mom?
- DK: She taught.
- MK: Would you remember the names of the other teachers?

DK: Hatada-*sensei*—he was the guy. Toyama-*sensei* and Nishimura—she was a little younger person. Came from Pā‘ia. She commuted all the way from Pā‘ia to come.

MK: That’s quite a distance.

DK: Yes. She was a kind of younger person, very nice.

MK: Just based on your experiences in the Japanese[-language] school, what kinds of things did the school teach the kids back then?

DK: A lot of *shūshin*. You know what that is?

MK: Ethics.

DK: Yes, yes.

MK: Stories or proverbs or . . .

DK: Yes. . . . I wish I can recall a lot of stuff. My kid sister would know more. She’s younger but she has good memory that’s why.

My dad was very strict was all I know. Very strict. [If] the kids didn’t behave—wow—they had to stand in the corner with the big dictionary and hold it for the longest time. Go down they got to put it up. I remember that. He was very strict with the kids.

MK: When it came to what you’re supposed to do as a good citizen or how you’re supposed to feel towards your country, what did you folks learn?

DK: We had American flag too. (Chuckles) We had to respect. That’s what we were told when we were young.

WN: Was there like the emperor’s picture or anything like that?

DK: You know I can’t recall that.

WN: You went to Makawao School? The English [public] school? Was that the name of the school?

DK: Yes. Makawao Elementary.

WN: What did you like better? [Did] you like Japanese school or did you like American school better?

DK: Those days it didn’t matter. (Laughs)

WN: I thought maybe---you said that by the time you were on Maui it was kind of hard because your father was principal and your mother was teacher. Why was hard for you?

DK: Well, my dad was strict. So you know, but we accepted that.

(Telephone rings. Taping stops, then resumes.)

WN: I was wondering if your classmates at Japanese school sort of teased you because you were the principal’s daughter or anything like that?

DK: I don’t think so. Not really. I don’t know. My dad was strict so maybe they didn’t like it too. (DK and MK chuckle.) It’s odd you know. But we were young so. . . .

- MK: Your parents would teach Japanese-language school. So that's reading, writing, speaking Japanese.
- DK: Yes, Saturdays my mom had sewing. Kimono sewings. My dad really liked the arts so he had a lot of things he did with art. He was very good in art. Drawing and those kinds.
- MK: How about calligraphy?
- DK: We never learned those things those days. That came later I think. He was very good in those things.
- MK: And your mom taught sewing—Japanese style.
- DK: Japanese kimono.
- MK: Kimono. Did she teach any other things besides the sewing on Saturdays?
- DK: Yes, she taught school. Earlier on it was only the two of them. Later on we went to Maui then we had more teachers.
- MK: With your dad teaching, your mom teaching, even on Saturdays she's busy yeah? How did you folks manage in the household?
- DK: Somehow we did. (Laughs)
- MK: Just, all the girls and mom and dad. You folks took care of the house and everything?
- DK: Yes, because the cottage is right next to the school. You don't have to go away right? It's right in that same. . . .
- MK: And what kind of chores did you have? You were the second oldest so what did you have to do?
- DK: I think I had to mop the floors. My mom was a very neat person so we had to wipe all the whatever. Everything had to be very neat. The floor's got to be clean all the time. So, we had that kind of chores but cooking we didn't do when we were young.
- MK: How about babysitting? Since you had younger ones.
- DK: I guess we watched the younger ones. We had to right? Because the younger one below me is eight years younger.
- MK: When you weren't doing chores and you weren't going to school, what did you do for fun?
- DK: I get all mixed up with the Big Island and Maui so. . . . We used to play around. We used to visit friends. Big Island we had a good friend. They had twelve children but they were such a nice family. We used to go there all the time. They're all busy working and we go there and bother them. Sometimes even sleep over. They make us sleep over with their twelve kids. (Laughs) They were a nice family, the Higa family.
- Maui was---people didn't live that close by. We had fun.
- MK: In like Makawao, what kind of work did most of the people do? Like Hakalau Plantation yeah? But Makawao, what were people doing?
- DK: What kind of work did they do?
- WN: Did they have cattle ranches over there?

- DK: Yes. Upper Makawao I think they had. But there were a few people that I used to visit sometimes. They were up that way. They had stores. My good friend, they had a service station not too far away. And stores.
- MK: What kind of stores?
- DK: They had regular grocery stores, a bakery.
- WN: Was that [T.] Komoda Store?
- DK: Yeah, it's still there. I don't know if the same people or what, but we used to go there. And [K.] Matsui [Store], where we used to wait for our bus to go to high school. The bus would stop there and we used to all get on the bus and go to H-Poko (chuckles) or whatever they called it.
- WN: H-Poko, that's Hāmākua-Poko.
- DK: Yes, Hāmākua-Poko.
- MK: You mentioned the service station. Did your dad have a car?
- DK: Yes. We always had from maybe in Honolulu. We never went without a car. We used to have a car.
- MK: Besides teaching school, what other things did your dad do?
- DK: He loved his fishing. Go, the Japanese checkers. Fishing. Later on, he took up golf after the war. He started in the internment camp, so he liked his golfing.
- MK: How active was he in the Japanese community? Sometimes you hear about men who translated letters or who used to take things to the Japanese consul. . .
- DK: I don't know if they had things like that at that time.
- MK: . . . or do things like that. How about your dad?
- DK: I don't know. I don't think so.
- MK: Was he active in any organizations like the Japanese associations or *kenjinkais* [prefectural association] or anything like that on Maui?
- DK: I can't remember. I know he used to go to Hilo a lot. He used to go to play go and he liked his fishing.
- MK: So he went fishing?
- DK: What else did he do at that time? Later on he took up golfing when the relocation camp.
- MK: He learned it in the relocation camp?
- DK: Yes, and he loved his golfing so when we came back he was golfing all the time.
- WN: How often did you folks go down to Wailuku?
- DK: Not that often. Only to go Kress store or something like that. (Laughs)
- WN: So that was like a big deal to go to Kress in Wailuku.
- DK: Yeah, it was. If you always had a car.

WN: What about the Maui County Fair? Did you folks go at all?

DK: I don't remember. Maybe they had but. . . .

MK: Sometimes people would talk about—Japanese movies would come with the *benshi* [live narrators] or kabuki and what do you remember about things like that? Movies or kabuki?

DK: Kabuki, no. I don't think I went when I was young like that. But we used to go to movies. Not in the theater you know, it was outdoor movies we used to have when we were young.

MK: I was wondering, what schools did you go to on Maui?

DK: [It] was only Makawao Elementary and then Maui High School for a little bit. Sophomore I think I just went to the Mainland already. The war started.

WN: How far was Maui High School from Makawao? Was it like a long bus ride or. . . .

DK: At that time it's long.

(Laughter)

The transportation. We had to wait by Matsui Store. Komoda Store, and Matsui is right across. That's where we waited for our bus to get on. Whoever went to Maui High School caught the bus.

WN: When you were going to Maui High School did you keep going to Japanese school?

DK: Maui? I'm sure we did because we were in Makawao.

MK: Would you have any memories about Makawao Elementary? When you went to Makawao School, how was that for you?

DK: Well, I didn't like this one teacher. She was so strict. It's all I remember.

MK: What did she do that made you think she was so strict?

DK: I don't know. She was just strict. Alapai or whatever her name was.

MK: And then Maui High School, that was . . .

DK: Only not too long.

MK: Not too long yeah. I remember the last time we're here, you told us that your older sister went to Japan? When was that? About when?

DK: Before the war started I think. So she was in Japan.

MK: How come she was . . .

DK: . . . sent to Japan? Because my dad had a mom and she was living in O'ahu and she went back to Japan—his mother. I guess my dad sent her [DK's older sister] to Japan so she studied in Japan. So she didn't come back until way later.

MK: So she came back after the war?

DK: Let me see, (pause) I don't know. No, she got married. During the war she met a Mainland guy, a GI. They were stationed in Japan with the service. She got married to him so she ended up in LA.

- MK: And then your mom and dad, did they ever go to Japan before the war? Did they ever go back, visit or anything for anything?
- DK: Before, no. They couldn't. They don't have money to go (chuckles) those days.
- MK: Before the war started, did your mom or dad ever talk about, "It looks like it's getting kind of complicated or strained between Japan and the U.S." Did they ever talk about anything like that?
- DK: They may have, but I don't know too much. My dad went back though [after World War II]. He lived there after my mom passed on.
- MK: Now I guess we'll go to December 7. I think you were still. . . . Were you on Maui that time?
- DK: December 7. Must be.
- WN: You said sophomore maybe.
- DK: I think so. Maui. They came to take my dad [Torao Taketa] away. That's all we know. That's all we remember. The FBI people came and we didn't know what was happening. They said they're going to take him.
- MK: They took him to some camp somewhere on Maui.
- DK: They took all those principals and Buddhist priests and some businessmen.
- MK: So, looking back on that day, were you at home when they took your dad?
- DK: Oh yes.
- MK: What do you remember about that? Just kind of picture in your mind what you remember.
- DK: They came while we were all sleeping. I don't know who they were—FBI's or whoever. So many of them came and they said, "Mr. Taketa, you come as you are." So he had to get dressed and they searched him that he didn't have any weapon or whatever—knife or anything like that. They searched his pocket. They didn't say where he was going to go and they just took him. We didn't know until much later.
- MK: Then what did your father say to them when they were taking him?
- DK: He couldn't say anything. All these guys handcuffed him or whatever they did and he didn't have anything in his pocket. They made sure. Just come and change his clothes because it was middle of the night. They just took him away and we didn't know what was happening.
- MK: How was your mom reacting to this?
- DK: She was kind of shocked. Scared. What did he do that they came to get him? We didn't know war started.
- MK: At that point you were like the oldest daughter at home.
- DK: At that time, yeah. We all get up and we say, "Gee, what's happening?" I mean, what can we say? Much later, we could go visit him.
- MK: Where did you folks go visit him?
- DK: I think Wailuku? I think it was---they put him in like a prison. Something like that.

- MK: And when you folks went to visit him, did you take items to him? Or what did you folks do?
- DK: No, no. We cannot take anything. They don't want anything. So, my mom was shocked, "What did he do that they have to take him away?"
- MK: How did the other Japanese that your family knew, how did they react to all this?
- DK: They kind of stayed away I think. If I'm not mistaken. They thought something that my dad did wrong, that he was taken away. It was not easy for us.
- MK: So, in the early days did you folks know that maybe some other Japanese people were also taken in too? Did you folks know?
- DK: Later yeah, we were able to visit him. It's quite a ways.
- MK: You were saying that some people kind of stayed away.
- DK: Yeah, yeah. Just like that. It was not easy.
- MK: Were there some people who kind of helped you folks?
- DK: Yeah, there were some nice people around.
- MK: With the Japanese schools closed down and your father taken, how did you folks manage?
- DK: I think---if I'm not mistaken where did our assistance come from. . . .the government I think a little bit. How can we survive otherwise? It's more my mother went through all that. We were younger so. (Laughs)
- MK: I know that before you folks went to Jerome [War Relocation Center]—before the family went to Jerome—you said something about you had already gone to Honolulu? Were you in . . .
- DK: Yeah I was out a little bit I think because I had an uncle—my father's brother—living here [Honolulu]. Younger brother, so I stayed with them I think. If I'm not mistaken.
- MK: Would you know how come your family decided to go to the Mainland? Was it a choice?
- DK: Choice? Well. . .
- MK: How did it come about?
- DK: I think a lot of us whose father was taken away decided to go because how else would we survive otherwise?
- MK: How did you hear about the decision? You were out. You were in Honolulu. What happened?
- DK: I can't recall but I guess my mom said, "We're gonna go" or something like that. I mean, I have to follow, right? I'm young. That was it.
- MK: So they sent word to you that . . .
- DK: We're going to go. So I was Honolulu at the time.
- MK: How did you feel when you were told—going to the Mainland?

- DK: Well, I was young so you know, I have to. It didn't matter I guess.
- MK: I've heard that the families were taken to the immigration station [U.S. Immigration and Naturalization building] yeah?
- DK: Yes.
- MK: So, what was that like being at the immigration station?
- DK: Well (laughs) as I said we were young so we made friends and we made the best of it.
- MK: What was the living situation like at the immigration station? How was it set up?
- DK: My memory not that great, but we all slept in one room I think. We had fun because we made friends. (Laughs) All the teenagers right? We got different people we never met before. They came from different islands. We made the best of everything.
- MK: Your mom had really young ones. Where did they put your mom and the young ones? Same place?
- DK: I can't recall but they were more separated because she had young kids. A baby yet.
- MK: And then you folks got on the [SS] *Lurline* and how was that? First time on a big ship.
- DK: It was something. (Chuckles)
- MK: How did you fare on the ship?
- DK: I really can't remember. Coming back I kind of remember because I'm older. We came back with the GIs. [Americans of] Japanese [Ancestry]. Japanese soldiers that fought and we came back with those boys.
- MK: Going over you don't remember too much that . . .
- DK: It wasn't too good because you get seasick.
- MK: You got seasick?
- DK: I think I got a little bit. But, I guess we made friends—you know, being young.
- MK: So even on the ship you could be with other young people.
- DK: Yes, but I remember coming back more I guess.
- MK: After the ship's journey to the Mainland, you folks had a train ride. What do you remember about the train ride?
- DK: Those were the trains that—not the regular train—all that black soot comes out. You know get all---coal train. They were run by coal. We waited and waited in the cold.
- I think---where did we go first? We went Frisco and then Arkansas. It was a long ride in a not nice kind of train. That kind of (DK makes a train chugging sound.) make noise and we didn't know where we were heading for. We got there kind of funny kind of time. Then it was kind of wintertime I think it was. Kind of cold if I'm not mistaken.
- MK: Were you folks prepared for the cold?
- DK: No. (Laughs) Not at all! A lot of people didn't even have shoes I think—the Hawaiian people. You know, because you always had *zori* or whatever. Go barefooted to school.

So, a lot of---I know guys that didn't have shoes. We went to Jerome and we had to order from Sears or something—a catalog.

MK: Then, all along the time you folks traveling, were there guards or military people watching you folks?

DK: You know, I can't recall but I'll let you know. I can't recall. Did Marian [Takagi] folks tell you?

MK: No, we didn't talk to them yet. Oh, we talked to Pat [Nomura]. I forget what she said.

DK: Pat. She was with Marian.

MK: So you go on your journey and you get to Jerome. Were there people there already when you folks arrived?

DK: Maybe the Mainland people were around already. Mainland Japanese. The barracks were older, their side. We had the---was Jerome? I get mixed up with Tule Lake, that's why. No, Jerome was same. We had barracks. We didn't know where we were going and we thought our dad was waiting. But no such thing, right?

MK: Your dad was not at Jerome then?

DK: No, no. He was somewhere else. Where were they? [Camp Livingston] Louisiana first and then he went to Santa Fe. Something like that.

MK: So when you got to Jerome, you're a teenager and you see the barracks. It's cold.

DK: Yes.

MK: What were you thinking? What did you think in your mind?

DK: We were young so (chuckles) I don't know what I thought at that time. I can't recall. But I'm sure my mom folks felt, you know. She had a young one too.

When did we reach there? I forgot. What month? It was a long time.

MK: January. . . '43 yeah? Long time ago.

What were the barracks like?

DK: Just a barrack with the heater right there. What they call that?

MK: Potbelly stove.

DK: I have pictures like that. I have all those yearbooks too but. . . Just bare room with cots.

WN: You're like fifteen years old and you're used to maybe a house with maybe sharing a room with your sisters or something. Now you move into this place where the whole family is in one room?

DK: Yes.

WN: How was that for you? Was that hard?

DK: Well, at the time I guess I didn't think too much.

WN: You don't have privacy as much. (Chuckles)

- DK: I guess not. (Laughs) We didn't think that way, I guess, at that time. We just had to do with what we had I guess.
- MK: When you look back on that time—here's your mom with all the daughters and baby. Kind of young, yeah? Would you remember anything that she said as sort of like a comment on the situation or anything or how she was acting?
- DK: She was a pretty strong woman—my mom. She didn't complain. I don't remember. It was a little rough for her because the little one a little too young. She never complained and she found some kind of work to do. What did she do? I forgot what she did. All the people had to do something. My dad was not there yet. He joined us way later.
- MK: So your mom did some kind of work in the camp?
- DK: I forgot what she did. (Laughs) My sisters would remember.
- MK: But she did work?
- DK: Yes. Even with the little one.
- MK: For things like laundry area or toilets or showers, how was all of that?
- DK: All outside. See, we had only one barrack. Depends on your family. If you had a bigger family maybe you had more room and space. But, all that laundry and bathroom was all out in another area. If you lived far away from that area, then you had farther to walk and it's not easy when it's wintertime right? But we weren't too far away so it wasn't bad.
- Somehow we survived. I mean, we were young right? So, we made friends right away with people and went to school. The thing about it is school was already, I think, started and us Hawai'i people we don't speak like the Mainland Japanese right? So, a lot of them they couldn't understand. (Laughs) For real, the Mainland Japanese right? They spoke not like us. It was kind of fun. (DK and MK laugh.) People wearing slippers and even in the cold. (WN laughs.) No shoes.
- WN: So you had to wait until you got your shoes from the Sears catalog? Is that what you did?
- DK: Yes, a lot of them. I don't know if I had one but most of the kids were wearing slippers and *geta*. Yes, in the cold.
- WN: That's cold.
- DK: We weren't dressed right and we had to order our overcoats from Sears in the catalog.
- WN: When you order something it takes a while to get there yeah? I was wondering. (Chuckles)
- DK: I guess so. I don't remember that. I know I ordered from Sears.
- WN: You told us last time that you folks were issued blankets for your cots?
- DK: Yes. Army blankets.
- WN: For the cots. I see.
- DK: That was provided. And just a bare room with just a—I don't know what they called it at that time—heater-like in that room. Bare room with the cots.
- MK: How was the food? People said it was like you had a mess hall. How was the food? How did you find the food there?

DK: Well, at that time we didn't have much anyway. So, we didn't matter I guess. You know, our days we didn't have anything fancy. But, I thought we were well fed (laughs) because of that.

MK: What kind of food did you guys have over there?

DK: You know, I can't really recall. (DK and MK laugh.) Breakfast was breakfast I guess. I kind of forgot. We had a lot of—what they call that kind of meat—maybe lamb or something like that I think. I think so.

MK: Did you eat lamb?

DK: Never ate before, but we had no choice. That was what we were fed. (DK and MK laugh.)

MK: How about any Japanese-style food?

DK: I don't think so.

MK: No more.

DK: No. Not really.

WN: You told us last time you had some friends from Hawai'i. You said two girls from Kaua'i were part of your group.

DK: But we got to be friends. Let me see. I don't know if they're all living now. Janet [Uehara] is still here. Asako [Takahata] passed away. Sumi—we used to get together a lot before but somehow we got disconnected. Sumi became blind. I don't know if she's still around.

WN: This is Sumi Ochiai Nii?

DK: Nii. Yes. We used to be in touch a lot.

WN: Were you all about the same age?

DK: Yes, Janet was a little older. Asako too. Sumi and I about the same.

MK: You folks became real good friends in camp.

DK: Yes, we were always together. We went to dinner—they were busy too but we had good time. Even after we came back. We were in touch a lot until not too long ago I guess we all got disconnected.

MK: Like you mentioned that you folks would go eat dinner together.

DK: Yes, we did a lot together.

MK: Instead of eating with the families, you folks would just go eat together.

DK: Sometimes. Yes. You know teenagers.

WN: So you would walk together to the mess hall and then eat and sit together.

DK: Right. We did a lot. We used to play together.

WN: I wonder, had handsome, good-looking boys over there in camp?

DK: I guess we weren't interested.

(Laughter)

We were busy with ourselves. Yeah, there were I guess.

WN: Did they have social things like dances?

DK: They had.

WN: Did you go?

DK: We did. We just wanted to nose around and that's where I met my husband [Stanley Kimura]. He was in the service [442nd RCT]—army. So, Christmas I think boys from [Camp] Shelby came over for Christmas and we had a dance—not that we could dance but we wanted to know what it was like so us girls went over and. . . .

MK: And you sang?

DK: Yeah. I guess I was asked to sing so I sang and that's where he spotted me so that's how we became friends.

MK: Were you part of a group or something? You know, you would sing?

DK: No, no. I just loved to sing from young days. I sang on the ship going and coming back. I don't know, I just was brave (laughs) more than anything.

WN: When you say singing are you just talking about singing with your friends or did you actually sing in front of people?

DK: Yes. I used to love to sing from young days I guess. I still sing.

MK: So you're being modest then if you can sing in front of people.

DK: Even after I came back they had contests like that. Brave yeah? I just entered contests and I won trips.

WN: Oh! Oh my goodness.

DK: First was I think Japanese [song contests]? I entered all kinds [of] contests.

MK: So like in camp, there were times when you could sing and you could do things with your friends that you made.

DK: Yes. I sang on the ship too.

MK: The ship too.

DK: Yes. Going or coming back, I forgot.

MK: There was a school in camp. Denson School. What was that school like? What was taught? Was it like regular school?

DK: Same like you were outside. We had teachers from outside too. Some from whoever were teachers before they got in, they continued teaching there. There were some *hakujin* [white] teachers from outside. Had everything.

MK: So your schooling continued like regular?

- DK: Mm-hmm.
- MK: You know, you folks are in barracks and there are guards and everything.
- DK: Well, they had a station where the guard stood there. You didn't see any of our yearbooks or books?
- MK: I think we saw a picture of the camp. I was wondering, how much of a presence—did you really feel the presence of the guards?
- DK: Not really. We didn't feel like that—I didn't anyway. They were around but we're all around so many of us so we didn't think anything—at least I didn't.
- MK: Other than school and maybe doing things with your friends informally, were there organized activities for young people?
- DK: I can't remember.
- MK: Like the dances?
- DK: We had dances like that for the older people.
- MK: Or clubs?
- DK: Yes, they had. I'm sure they had.
- WN: Were there any times where you could go out though? As a group or anything like that? Do you remember? Like go into town? Do you remember a town?
- DK: No, no town there.
- WN: No town.
- DK: All I know is when I went to see my dad in—where was his station in Louisiana or someplace?
- WN: Camp Livingston.
- DK: Yes. That's where we went *chotto* to that town area there and I think we shopped. I got a dress or something there if I'm not mistaken.
- MK: How were you folks treated when you went out to that town and to visit your father?
- DK: No difference. I don't think people looked at us. I don't know, we went on a train too. I don't know how we even got there. Brave. We don't know the area we went and we came back.
- WN: So you got like special permission I guess to leave Jerome and go to Louisiana to visit your father.
- DK: Yes, I think so. My mom was around. And even my younger sisters. We got there, we came back on the train.
- MK: When your mom and you folks were at Jerome, how much contact did you have—communication did you have—from your father? Letters? Did your mom get letters from your dad?
- DK: I kind of forgot but I have letters from him. I kept it.

- MK: You kept and so he sent letters to Jerome to you?
- DK: I think so, I just was looking at my album. I have Livingston.
- MK: I was wondering, you folks. . . . Oh no, you can show us later. Because you folks were separated. Father one place, wife and children another place. I was wondering if you folks communicated that time or. . . .
- DK: I think through letters. Because I know he wrote to me. I kept those letters.
- MK: He wrote in I guess *Nihongo* yeah?
- DK Japanese.
- MK: And then you mentioned that the 442[nd Regimental Combat Team] boys came from Shelby. Any other visits from people or people going out? Anything like that?
- DK: I don't think so.
- MK: Eventually, July—I guess that would be July '44 or so—you folks went to Tule Lake [Segregation Center] yeah?
- DK: Yes.
- MK: How come you folks went to Tule Lake?
- DK: The Tule Lake group was the people who planned on going back to Japan. There was other people who were sent to Tule Lake. The others went to Arizona or some other areas. We didn't go but, thank goodness.
- WN: Oh, you didn't go to Japan.
- DK: No, we didn't. I don't think my dad felt that we should go.
- MK: But earlier he was thinking that maybe you folks. . . .
- DK: I don't know if he [word unclear] or what but yeah they thought maybe would be better, but I'm glad we didn't. Japan was real soft, right?
- MK: When you got to Tule Lake, how did Tule Lake compare with Jerome?
- DK: Same camp. I think it was a colder area—Tule Lake—if I'm not mistaken. More north right?
- MK: When you went to Tule Lake . . .
- DK: It was a nicer building. More newer. Jerome was old buildings. I don't know if anybody else used there before.
- MK: Would you remember some of the other families that went to Tule Lake with you folks?
- DK: My friends—not all of them went—just Janet I think went to Tule. Asako and Sumi went another area. I wonder if Sumi was with us, I forgot. I mean, no different but Tule Lake had a lot of gangs they said. I don't know. (Chuckles) You know the young kids? Teenagers.
- MK: Did you feel anything?
- DK: No, no. We had fun. (Laughs)

- MK: And you continued school at Tule Lake?
- DK: Yes. I think we—if I'm not mistaken—I graduated there, Tule Lake.
- MK: And, when you graduated at Tule Lake—usually when kids graduate from school they start thinking about their future. How about you?
- DK: No. We had no future. (Laughs) I don't know how long after we came back, so I forgot about that too. We just went along I guess.
- MK: Finally, at Tule Lake you got to be with your father yeah? He was there?
- DK: I think so. Yes, he was there already if I'm not mistaken. I forgot.
- MK: What was it like seeing your father after being separated for long time and. . .
- DK: I mean we were in a barrack so we don't do much right?
- MK: After your stay at Tule Lake what did you folks do?
- DK: We came back here. We didn't have a place to stay so I think my dad had a friend in Honolulu so we stayed with them a little bit. Then—I don't know—he had to find work so I think he did some all kind of stuff. I don't know what he did. I don't know how long after, but he opened a restaurant but he never even cooked in his life. (Laughs) He opened a *saimin* shop and he made a living.
- But then, let me see what happened. He got a second wife, because my mom passed away early. He opened a *saimin* shop and they made a living on that.
- MK: Before that, you were saying he did all kinds of work like I think last time you said . . .
- DK: Yes, he worked at *sake-ya*. I know that.
- MK: He worked at the sake brewery?
- DK: Yes, he did all kinds you know.
- MK: You mentioned something about he was also a dishwasher?
- DK: Yes. He did all kinds.
- MK: So he had to find whatever he could get?
- DK: To survive, yeah.
- WN: You said the restaurant was named Cheryl's.
- DK: Yes. He opened that *saimin* shop. He never cooked in his life but he made good *saimin*. He made a living. (Laughs) That was with his second wife already.
- WN: So your father was a Japanese school principal and teacher before the war. He was interned. Spent the war years in camp. Came back. And he worked all these different kinds of jobs not related to Japanese school teaching, yeah?
- DK: Because no Japanese school already at that time. I don't think so. He did all kinds to make a living.
- MK: And then what did you do? You came back and. . .

DK: What did I do?

WN: Well, tell us about your life after you came back from camp. Backing up a little bit, you met your husband [Stanley Kimura]. He was a 442 soldier and they came from Camp Shelby to visit Jerome. And you met him a dance you said.

DK: Because I sang.

WN: So then, you folks came back on the boat and was he on that boat?

DK: No.

MK: Not on that one.

WN: But there are other GIs on the boat.

DK: Oh yes, 100[th Infantry Battalion] or 442 boys. But he used to write me from Europe too, somehow. We used to correspond.

WN: Were you worried about him?

DK: No. We just were friends. We just met in Jerome. But, I don't know if he wrote from there or what, but when I came back he was at the pier waiting. (Chuckles)

MK: Oh!

DK: He was home already.

MK: He was waiting for you?

DK: Yes.

WN: Were you expecting that?

DK: No. I don't think so.

(Laughter)

WN: How nice.

DK: He had a lot of girlfriends, but that's how it ended anyway.

MK: And then you folks got married in—was it 1950?

DK: I think so.

MK: Nineteen-fifty.

WN: Nineteen-fifty, okay. So you came back in '46, maybe '45?

DK: I don't know.

WN: Okay, '45, '46.

MK: Eventually you folks started a well-known business.

DK: He started first. He went to school. He went to first Academy of Arts early on, then he went to Fred Archer's or something. Mainland photography school. Then he came back.

MK: The name of your photography business was?

DK: House of Photography.

MK: House of Photography.

DK: My boys are running [it] now. My two sons.

WN: Gee, so how many years now? Started what, 1950?

DK: Yes, around there.

MK: Around there. Shortly after---about the time you folks married?

DK: Yes.

WN: Wow, so you're going on sixty-something years now. Fantastic. (Laughs)

MK: So you folks had the business and how many children?

DK: Six.

MK: Six children. Two of them are in the business yeah?

DK: The boys. So they're still at it.

MK: When you look back on your life, growing up in the islands, then World War II came, and then your father was taken away, and then your family ended up at Jerome and Tule Lake, and then you came back to the islands, your father was no longer a schoolteacher or principal--what do you think? What do you think of all that happened?

DK: What I think? To me it was pretty interesting. (Laughs) It was hard on my parents, I know, but we were young so. . . . I think I had a good life. I still have a good life. Easy life.

WN: Oh now easy.

DK: Yes, but in spite of that I had a pretty good life I think. My husband is a easy-going man too.

WN: That's good.

DK: He's not that kind who tell you, "Do this or that." He does what he wants to, so, he's a happy man.

MK: Well, we thank you. We thank you for today's interview.

DK: Oh, not much but. . . .

WN: Thank you.

MK: No, I know it's good to hear you know like a young person's perspective on the whole experience. Because it's different depending on whether you're the mom or the teenaged daughter or different. So this is good. Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW

Unspoken Memories:

Oral Histories of Hawai‘i Internees at Jerome, Arkansas

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